Welcome to the Next Level Series

TIME AND BUSYNES
RESPONDING TO THE IDOLATRY OF BUSYNES

Pre-Game
For many Americans, time is a commodity as precious as any talent or healthy portfolio. With a need to do more and more in less and less time, we face what could be called a ‘crisis of busyness.’ In college, juggling classes, practices, rehearsals, meetings, jobs, friends and (occasionally) sleep is a daily challenge. No host of convenient technologies such as email, cell phones or handheld computers seem to magically give us more time. And graduation only promises increased busyness. In order to be a faithful steward of your time and life in college, you must respond to this crisis of busyness in light of biblical truths. This study explores the root causes of our busyness and provides a biblical foundation for re-thinking time and busyness.

Theme
The many demands on our schedules can lead to a level of busyness that is emotionally stressful, physically draining and spiritually crippling. This unhealthy busyness is rooted not just in external tasks and deadlines but also in an internal struggle with idols.

Practice
In order to free ourselves from the slavery of busyness, we must turn away from vanity and laziness and trust Christ alone as the source of our self worth and identity.

Symbol Key

Indicates discussion questions

Indicates Biblical passages to look up

Indicates application questions to be discussed

Welcome to the Next Level Series

Christ and the Classroom
It’s Not Just a Game
Time and Busyness
The Importance of the Church
I. The Symptoms of Busyness

When the crisis of busyness escalates in your life, what do you sacrifice: working out, sleep, class, eating, time with friends, email, devotional time or something else?

Consider your current schedule at college – practice, classes, meetings, work. Many consider busyness a sign of productivity, ability and ambition. But does our busyness reflect a good stewardship of time? Our lives in our busiest moments sometimes seem nothing like Jesus’ promise that we “may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

Read Philippians 4:1-7
- Are you able to ‘rejoice’ in the midst of your current schedule at college?
- Why do you think you feel ‘anxious’ about busyness and time?

Over-busyness can have harmful effects on us, robbing of physical and emotional energy and leaving us anxious and unable to rejoice in our spiritual lives.

- emotionally stressful - A 2002 cover article by Fortune Magazine reported that thousands of people are hospitalized each year due to stress.
- physically draining - Sleep deprivation is known to weaken our immune systems, cause depression and lower our mental and physical capabilities.
- spiritually crippling - The number one reason why students aren’t committed to churches, don’t read their Bibles and don’t participate in campus fellowship groups is that they are ‘too busy.’

With our schedules packed so full, we often feel enslaved to an endless list of things to do. We feel like we are helpless victims under siege by the demands of coaches, professors, bosses, friends and personal goals.

Read Romans 6:5-11
- Why are you enslaved to busyness? Are you ‘helpless’ in this struggle?

While we are enslaved to our busyness, we are not helpless victims. Busyness is not something that just happens to us. At the root of the crisis of time and busyness in our lives is sin and heart idolatry. As a result, better time management and study habits are only ‘band-aids’ for a cancer that is destroying us from within. Christ’s work on the cross releases us from sin’s enslaving power. We must claim this freedom by dealing with the root issue of sin that lies behind our struggle with busyness.

What sins and heart idolatries lie behind your struggle with busyness?
II. THE IDOLATRY OF BUSYNESS

Behind our struggle with busyness lie some dangerous heart idols. Pastor and author Eugene Peterson says that we are busy for two reasons: vanity and laziness.

The vanity of busyness - self-worth and the idolatry of work

We often think that the adjective ‘busy’ is an indicator of commitment or ability, but it may more likely be an indicator of a vain search for self-worth. Why is this? Our tendency is to define ourselves by what we do and not who we are.

Consider this quote from Peterson’s *Contemplative Pastor*:
“I am busy because I am vain. I want to appear important. Significant. What better way than to be busy? The incredible hours, the crowded schedule, and the heavy demands on my time are proof to myself - and to all who will notice - that I am important.”

How have you felt this way? Do you boast (complain) of how much work you have? Why does it make you feel better to have more to do than others?

We often find significance in our self worth through how much work we do. The more we do, the better we are, so the mantra goes. While there may be good motives to work hard, when we try to find significance and fulfillment through work we are worshipping and serving an idol.

Read Luke 10:38-42
- What do you think was at the root of Martha’s complaint?
- How does Jesus’ response indicate that the main issue was idolatry?

We, like Martha, look for self worth apart from Christ. We won’t say ‘no’ to things - and thus get busier and busier - because our vanity thirsts for significance in the God-substitute of work. But Christ offers us a different system. He says “for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

When you face the crisis of busyness, are you most likely to feel guilt, anger, fear or driven-ness? How do these reactions indicate your idolatry of work?

The laziness of busyness - identity and the idolatry of passivity

Peterson reveals an irony in our struggle with time - we are busy because we are lazy. We passively sit by and let others’ expectations define who we are and what we do.

What types of things tend to distract you from accomplishing your priorities?
Welcome to the Next Level - Time and Busyness

We won’t say ‘no’ to things - and thus get busier and busier - because our laziness allows distractions to rush in and divert us from our priorities.

- What demands and distractions were the people in Luke 9 facing? How did they respond?
- What demands were others likely putting on Jesus? How did he respond?

Our idolatry of passivity leads us to look to others to define who we are and what we should do. But our identity should be in Christ and we need to “set our hearts...and minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (Colossians 3:1,2)

How does being intentional about setting priorities help you say ‘no’ to activities and responsibilities that would distract you from your priorities?

III. POST-GAME: THE BALANCE OF BUSYNESS

Read Galatians 5:22-23
- In what ways does busyness at its extreme spoil these fruits?

While dealing with heart idols is our first priority in confronting the crisis of busyness, one practical way of balancing our schedules is to consider the urgency and importance of our activities and responsibilities. Steven Covey offers the following grid:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quadrant I: Urgent and Important</td>
<td>Midterm due tomorrow</td>
<td>New email!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flesh wounds</td>
<td>Phone ringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attending Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadrant II: Urgent but Unimportant</td>
<td></td>
<td>I II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prayer, quiet time</td>
<td>III IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time with friends</td>
<td>Watching TV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sleep, Eating meals</td>
<td>Playing videogames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working out</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadrant III: Not Urgent but Important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadrant IV: Not Urgent and Unimportant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider the grid above. Where do you spend most of your time?
- How can you avoid the ‘tyranny of the urgent’ (getting caught up in Quadrant II)?
- How can you ensure that you consistently spend time in Quadrant III activities?
- How can you reduce the time you spend in Quadrant IV?

“We have, of course, much to teach and much to get done, but our primary task is to be.” - Eugene Peterson, The Contemplative Pastor

Tip: use your appointment calendar as a tool with which to get un-busy. How? If someone asks you to commit to another meeting or event and you say ‘I don’t think I should do that; I was planning to use the time to pray,’ the response will be ‘Well, I’m sure you can find another time to do that.’ But if you say ‘My appointment calendar will not permit it,’ no further questions are asked. You must schedule margins in your life for Quadrant II activities!